

Home Reading.

Vincta.

From the German of Wilhelm Muller.
From the sea's deep, deep, unfeathomed distance
Evening bells are chiming faint and low,
Telling us with sorrowful insistence
Of that fairest town of long ago.

In the bosom of the ocean hidden,
Far beneath, those ruins still remain,
While their towers, with golden gleams unbidden,
Flash us back their ancient light again.

And the sailor, if such mighty beauty
Greets him, as the sun is going down,
Calls forever on that call of duty,
Through around him all the gales may frown.

From the heart's deep, deep, unfeathomed distance,
Sounds tell like bells most faint and low;
Ah, the love that loved us long ago.

What a fairy world has been hidden!
How its ripples far below remain;
Gleaming heavenly gleams at times unbidden
Up to sparkle in our dreams again!

Oh, that I might plunge in those abysses—
Lose myself in that remembered light—
Called, as by an angel to the blisses
Of that dear old Wonder town so bright!

—S. W. D.

The Economic Function of Vice.

For some inscrutable reason, which has as yet given no hint of revealing Nature is wondrously wasteful in the matter of generation. She creates a thousand and where she intends to make use of them. Impelled by maternal instinct, the female cod casts millions of eggs upon the waters, expecting them to return after many days as troops of interesting offspring. Instead, half the embryos *pedi* are almost immediately devoured by spawn-eaters, hundreds of thousands perish in incubation, hundreds of thousands more succumb to the perils attending ichthyic infancy, leaving but a few score to attain to adult usefulness and pass an honored old age with the fragrance of a well-spent life, in a country grove.

This is the law of all life, animal as well as vegetable. Life is sown broadcast, only to be followed almost immediately by a destruction nearly as sweeping. The main difference is that, the higher we ascend, the less lavish the creation, and the less sweeping the destruction. Thus, while probably but one fish in a thousand reaches maturity, of every 1,000 children born 604 attain adult age. That is, Nature flings aside 999 out of every 1,000 fishes as useless for her purposes, and two out of every five human beings.

Many see in this relentless weeding out and destruction of her inferior products a remarkable illustration of the wisdom of Nature's methods. What would they think of a workman so bungling that two-thirds of the products of his handiwork were only fit for destruction?

The struggle for existence is a tremendous scuffle to get rid of this vast surplage. The "survival of the fittest" is the success of the minority in demonstrating that the majority are superfluous. It is the Kilkenny cat episode multiplied by infinity. It will be remembered that the whole trouble arose from their common belief that two eats were a surplus of one for the Kilkenny environment.

Darwin's theory recognizes in this superfecundity and ruthless reciprocal extermination of Nature, her most potent agency for improvement. The benignity of this method of arranging the order of Nature is now apparent to a member of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals might desire.

But our opinion of this law is not cared for. The main importance attaches to the recognition of the fact that it is a law. Its application to society is obvious. Since the propagation of human beings goes on with entire recklessness as to the quality of the product and the means of subsistence, some strong corrective is absolutely necessary to establish limits to population, and to secure the continued development of the race. If every begotten child lived to the average age of forty, in a very few years there would not be standing room in the earth for its people! Even with such limited propagators as the elephant, each female of which produces but six offspring in her bearing period of ninety years, we are told that, if the species had no parasitic or other enemies, it would only be 740 years until elephants overran the earth. Where, then, should we assign limits to the productiveness of the 700,000,000 human females on the globe, each of whom is capable of producing twenty children in her life-time of bearing? If, too, every child had the same chances of life, without reference to its mental and physical fitness to live, humanity would soon become a stagnant slough of vicious vitality. As there are only food and room for the best, and as the development of the race demands it, only the best survive, and continue the work of propagation. The rest are destroyed. By "the best" is understood those having that harmony of mental and physical development which brings them most nearly into accord with natural laws.

Below the human strata, superabundant generation is neutralized by the simple law of having every organism prey upon some other one. In the ten years of fruitful life the female cod laid 50,000,000 eggs. If nothing thwarted the amiable efforts of herself and offspring to multiply and replenish, they would shortly pack the ocean as full as a box of sardines. But, while giving one animal the desire and capacity to produce 50,000,000 lives, Nature has given other animals the desire and capacity to annihilate those 50,000,000 lives. So, all through the animal kingdom it is nearly a neck-and-neck race between Production and Extermination.

Man alone is practically exempt from what is apparently an inseparable condition of all other forms of animal life. While he preys on myriad of created things, there is no created thing that preys on him, and assists in keeping his excessive reproductive power within the limits of subsistence. Most singular of all, not even a parasite wages destructive warfare against him.

This absence of destructive enemies must be compensated for in some way, and it is accomplished by making vicious inclinations the agents to weed out the redundant growths, and to select for extermination those which are inferior, depraved, weak, and unfit for preservation of reproduction.

If five human beings are procreated

where there is present room and provision for but three, how are the surplus two to be picked out and exterminated? History is full of illustrations of the benefit of vice in assisting to shape the destinies of nations and peoples. Take, for example, the *Levites*, whose stupidities and sins have paved the way to a proverb. In the last century the worse than worthless carcasses filled nearly every throne in Southern Europe. They seemed to breed like wolves in a famine-stricken land, and their fangs were at every people's throat. Fortunately, they had vices. Wine and lechery did what human enemies could not. The pack of wolves rotted away like a flock of diseased sheep.

The most commendable feature of this self-pruning of the objectionable growths in society is that the victims destroy themselves under the hallucination that they are drinking the sweetest wine of earthly pleasure. When execution can be made a matter of keen耻ish to the condemned, certainly nothing is wanting on the score of humanity.

I anticipate the objection that slaying bad men by means of their own vicious propensities brings much misery to those connected with them. But then all innocent persons connected with bad men are fated to suffer in exact proportion to the closeness of the connection, whether the bad man are destroyed or not. Weak, selfish, perverted, and criminal men almost always inflict misery upon their relatives and associates. This is not usually intensified by their being also drunkards, or *drâcheux*. It is also true that out of Nature's methods of extinction is pleasant to those connected with the victim. A thief or a thug providentially dying with the *delirium tremens* is certainly as bearable a sight to those before whose eyes it may come as the spectacle of a virtuous man, the sole support of his family, slowly wasting away with consumption, in spite of all that loving services and agonizing sympathy can do to retard and arrest a life that is of so much value to all.

To the next objection, that the practice of vice is not inevitably suicidal, since many rascals live to attain as green an old age as the most righteous, it is sufficient to say that, plentiful as these exceptions may occasionally seem, their proportion to the whole number is at least as small as that of the exceptions to any other general law of biology. The policeman on the next corner will bear decided testimony that the number of scoundrels who survive their thirtieth year is astronomically small, and he can name any number of very troublesome members of the community who are ending their lives in penitentiary or poor-house hospitals, at an age when well-behaved men are just entering upon the serious business of life.

It is also demonstrable that the proportion of vicious men to the whole population is much less to-day than at any previous period in the history of the race. This shows conclusively the improvement of society by the self-destructiveness of vice. The proportion of bad men is steadily diminishing, because bad men die sooner and propagate fewer than good ones.

A Peer of the Realm.

From speech of Hon. J. H. Parsons, Feb. 21, 1883.

"I got badly left in forming a hasty opinion of the lad-de-dah captain of an English iron-clad," said Captain Orms頓 of the steamship *Effective*. "During the war in Egypt I took out supplies to Alexandria, and after discharging, received orders to go to Berwickport for a charter. I knew nothing of the place, and had no chart of the north coast aboard the steamer. None of the merchant captains could supply me, and I finally concluded to apply to the captain of the ironclad *Invincible*, that lay close alongside of us as a last chance. I pulled up to the gangway and was met by one of the officers, who said I would have to wait a few moments, as the crew were going to 'quarters.' As he spoke, the boatswain's whistle was heard clear and sharp above the hoarse calls of the mates. Immediately, as if by magic, yards began to come down and to go aloft too, the blue-jackets rushing to and fro on the deck, and, of a sudden, bang! off went one of the eighty-ton guns fit to take your head off. After the men were piped down, I made my way up to the bridge, where I found a little light-haired man trotting up and down. His hat was cocked round on the side of his head; he wore long side-whiskers, and an eyelash dangled from a gold chain about his neck. As I approached he halted suddenly, whirled about on one foot, screwed his eyeglass into his eye, and in a sweet little piping voice said:

"My dear fellow, what can aw do fay you?" He cut such a figure that I was tempted to laugh in his face, but, controlling myself, I stated my errand. Immediately the little man had all the quartermasters running to find his sub-officers, and in a jiffy they returned, and, touching their caps, they began to report that Mr. A. was ashore on liberty. Mr. B. had gone to Cairo, and that Mr. C. was away in the first cutter—and so on. He then turned to me, and, rubbing his hands, said: "My dear fellow, Berwickport is a very fine place, aw assuay you, will find no trouble in getting in; aw was there once, and, taking my hat, I was quite a man!" and, touching my hat, I was about to go, when a big sailor looking officer appeared and informed the captain that there was no chart of the British north coast aboard the ship. Thanking the captain for his trouble, I went over the side and pulled aboard my own ship.

"No doubt you would have agreed with me that the captain was no sailor and a fool besides, but you would have been mistaken, as I was. The next night the *Invincible* went to see with a man in the chains heaving the lead. Of a sudden the breastplate parted, and away went the man overboard. The same little captain was on the bridge. He stopped the vessel, and just as he stood, oakenks and all on, went overboard to rescue his man. One of his lieutenants and a quartermaster jumped overboard to assist their commander. Instantly all was in an uproar. All hands were on deck. All the boats were lowered, and the four men in a few minutes were safe on board the *Invincible*. The leadman was entangled in the line and would probably have drowned but for the prompt assistance of the captain. In addition, this was the fourth man that same officer had rescued from drowning. His crew swam to him. He was a peer of the realm, and a better officer does not walk the deck of an English ship to-day. No, gentlemen, you can't always tell the man by the cut of his jib."

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